motivation through improved work-environment. Provision of new value added services for the business/ professional segment of customers is also in focus for optimising the upgraded retailing capacity of modernised postal counters. Computer based technologies are also being introduced in other areas of activity like financial services, PLI, Inventory control and Speed Post Service.

The department's policy of modernisation through induction of new technology is being achieved on the basis of an extensive training programme aimed at upgrading the skills of its employees.

The department is also seeking to segment its areas of activities catering for business and commercial sector and those for meeting universal service obligation with a view to improving quality of service and generation of revenue.

Telephone Exchange at Atgaon in Maharashtra

2565. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received a communication requesting Government for establishment of a Telephone Exchange at Atgaon in Thane district of Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the present status of the proposal; and

(c) by when the action is expected to be initiated?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is registered demand of 145 new telephone connections at Atgaon.

(c) A new electronic telephone exchange is planned to be opened during 1997-98.

Opening of New Post Offices in Maharashtra

2566. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of applications for opening new Post Offices in Maharashtra pending as on 31st December, 1996;

(b) the reasons for the pendency; and

(c) by when the new Post Offices are expected to be opened in Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) The number of applications for opening new post offices in Maharashtra pending as on 31st December, 1996 is 188.

(b) The reason for pendency is that the justification of these post offices is being examined at various levels.

(c) The Post Offices justified will be considered for opening subject to Plan targets and availability of resources.

Surrender of amount by Bihar Telecom Circle

2567. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Bihar Telecom Circle surrendered huge amounts meant for improvement of the telcom system in the State because of its non-utilisation;

(b) if so, the details thereof stating the amount surrendered; and

(c) the reasons for non-utilisation of the fund?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Bihar Telecom Circle has surrendered Rs. 37.07 crores only out of the fund allocated for 1995-96.

(c) The amount of Rs. 37.07 crores could not be used owing to non-receipt of